



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS

working for Zero Hunger



# PARLIAMENTARY ALLIANCES AGAINST HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

First Global Parliamentary Summit.  
Madrid, October 2018

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A LONG JOURNEY

## URUGUAY

October 2017. Members of the Parliamentary Front against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean during the Eighth Annual Forum that took place in the General Assembly of Uruguay. ©Department of Photography of the Parliament of Uruguay





**FOOD SECURITY  
IS THE RESULT  
OF POLICIES AND  
PROGRAMMES  
EMBEDDED IN  
LEGISLATION.**

# INTRODUCTION

**"EVERYONE HAS A RIGHT TO ADEQUATE, SAFE, SUFFICIENT, AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD AND TO FREEDOM FROM HUNGER, AND WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE NEED FOR SPECIFIC CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS TO ENSURE THE ENJOYMENT OF THOSE RIGHTS."**

Extract from the Statement by  
Parliamentarians on the occasion of the  
Second International Conference on  
Nutrition, November 2014

Parliamentary alliances are key to positioning the fight against hunger and malnutrition at the highest level of political agendas.

## NEPAL

Farmer Field School female members working in the fields trying new agricultural adaptation techniques. Nepal is one of the countries to have recently recognized the right to food in its constitution.

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Eliminating hunger and malnutrition requires policy measures with a broad focus that encompass all areas of the economy and society. Depending on each country's specific context, the conditions for engaging successfully in this fight may include increasing agricultural productivity and access to markets, investing in family farming and small-scale fisheries and forest holdings, promoting governance of land tenure and natural resources,

strengthening social protection mechanisms that take nutrition into account, investing in education, health care, water and sanitation, or a combination of some of these initiatives. In all cases, gender inequalities must be addressed and the mechanisms for coordinating and monitoring food security and nutrition must be improved.

However, for all of this to work, we need to stimulate collective action to lead us towards public





policy changes that improve the impact wherever advances against hunger have come to a halt and contribute to improving the current diet of a large part of the population. FAO is aware of this need and has promoted and supported several discussion fora on the issue, from the Parliamentary Front against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean, created in 2009, to the First Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition held

in Madrid in October 2018. Other organizations, such as the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Spanish Parliament, the Pan-African Parliament and the European Union, also participate in these types of dialogues.

Parliaments are essential for enforcing global commitments by enacting laws, directing

political discussion, approving budgets and guaranteeing adequate processes for accountability, as well as for monitoring, evaluating and implementing programmes. That is why it is necessary to build a global parliamentary alliance aligned with a new way of doing politics, where communities, regions and countries can together generate strategies that truly guarantee the Human Right to Food. ■

# THE CHALLENGES

For the third year in a row the number of undernourished people has increased, reaching 821 million. In addition, one in three people on the planet either does not eat enough or eats poorly: they suffer from malnutrition.

## ELIMINATING HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION: AN URGENT CHALLENGE

“There is no other way to say it; there are no extenuating circumstances. In a world that produces enough food to feed all its inhabitants, hunger is a crime.” José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General, and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, put it in these unequivocal terms in June 2018, when the numbers, which never lie, catapulted us back to the past. For several years, the joint efforts of countries and international organizations had managed to bring global hunger figures under control, reducing them year after year. However, 2016 witnessed a setback – the number of undernourished people in the world increased to 804 million (compared to 784 million in 2015). In 2017, this number increased once again, reaching 821 million people, according to data from the recent FAO report *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018*. This increase is explained

by structural problems, such as inequality and marginalization, together with temporary causes, such as the rise in conflicts.

As if that were not bad enough, one in three people on the planet suffers from malnutrition, meaning they either do not eat enough or they eat poorly. Put simply, one-third of the global population has an unbalanced diet and that can be damaging to health in varying degrees.

Malnutrition ranges from undernutrition in all its forms (wasting, stunting or underweight) to micronutrient deficiency or excess, and overweight and obesity. The most recent data tell us that there are still 46 million underweight people and that over 2 billion lack vital micronutrients (for example, iron, zinc or vitamin A). However, the most worrying figures, for numerous reasons, are those relating to the amount of people who are overweight and obese, which in 2016 stood at

1.9 billion adults, of which 672.3 million were obese. In the same year, 41 million children under the age of five were obese.

A person is overweight or obese when they weigh more than they should in relation to their height, and an abnormal accumulation of fat can affect a person's health. People become overweight or obese when there is an imbalance between the calories they





## KENYA

Farmer Lucy Kathegu Kigunda winnows beans in her farm near Meru. Kenya explicitly guarantees the right to adequate food in its constitution. ©FAO/Luis Tato

**IN ORDER TO  
ACHIEVE ZERO  
HUNGER WE  
NEED TO  
ADDRESS FOOD  
INSECURITY,  
MALNUTRITION  
AND  
OVERWEIGHT AT  
THE SAME TIME.**

consume (too many) and the calories they burn (not enough), increasing their risk of suffering from many non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease, strokes, diabetes, degenerative joint diseases and some forms of cancer, which are difficult to treat and financially costly for society.

Obesity affects all regions of the world and all socio-economic classes, particularly the

poorest. Rising consumption of high-calorie foods and drinks (with a high sugar and fat content) combined with waning levels of physical activity, has rendered excess weight and obesity a global problem, and one that can be found both in developing countries and in the most developed.

However, the spread of this pandemic is not the only

worry – 50 years ago it was a marginal issue – the speed at which it is developing is also a major concern. Obesity more than doubled between 1984 and 2014. Experts suggest that if there is no change in policy, by 2030, the number of overweight and obese people will have increased from 1.33 billion in 2005 to 3.28 billion. In other words, the issue will affect almost

# THE CHALLENGES

one-third of the global population projected for that year, according to estimates from the 2016 Foresight report by the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition.

Whether a result of deficiency or excess, malnutrition causes different diseases that affect both people's lives and countries' economies. Forty-five percent of deaths among under-fives (2.6 million children) are linked to undernutrition, while 3.4 million adults die each year as a result of diseases related to obesity and excess weight.

Over-nourishment is almost as serious a phenomenon as undernourishment, with many developing countries simultaneously registering high rates of undernutrition, anaemia (especially among women), obesity and overweight. Among sub-Saharan African men, the rate at which the number of overweight and obese people is growing currently outpaces the rate of growth for the number of underweight people. For women in South Asia, the prevalence of overweight and obese women is almost the same as the prevalence of underweight

women. In China, forecasts suggest that the combined percentage of overweight and obese adults will exceed 50 percent by 2030. This does and will have negative consequences for all countries, especially less developed ones, where the health costs, economic impact and loss of productivity that this causes exacerbate their poverty. Aside from the social cost, the cost that all forms of malnutrition generate for the global economy, as a result of the loss of productivity and the direct costs in health care, could represent up to 5 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), which would be equivalent to USD 3.5 trillion per year or USD 500 per person. It is estimated that the costs of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies represent 2–3 percent of global GDP, or between USD 1.4 trillion and USD 2.1 trillion per year. Although there are no global data available on the economic costs of people being overweight and obese, it is estimated that the cumulative cost of all non-communicable diseases – for which being overweight and obese are among the main risk factors – reached approximately USD 1.4 billion in 2010.

## PHILIPPINES

Children eating on plantain leaves in a place near Altavas. In January 2018, FAO and the Government of the Philippines launched a pilot parliamentary alliance for food security and nutrition.  
©FAO/Jake Salvador

## SDG2: ZERO HUNGER

In 2015, the 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, with their 169 targets and 250 indicators, are the framework in which the national development plans of each country should converge in order to eliminate poverty and hunger,





combat climate change, protect our natural resources, food and agriculture and guarantee that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

**SDG2, also known as the Zero Hunger Goal**, aims “to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.” This goal is closely linked

to SDG1: “to end poverty in all its forms everywhere”. However, the figures on hunger and malnutrition tell us that if we do not take decisive steps to change the current trend, we will not achieve SDG2 and, as such, will jeopardize the success of all the SDGs, which are closely interrelated.

We know about hunger and malnutrition; we know why they

are caused and where they are seen. Nevertheless, we are doing something wrong. Why are they on the rise again? Why have the number of overweight and obese people shot up? And, most importantly, what should we do to quickly reverse this trend and eliminate hunger and malnutrition?

FAO reminds us that through food – that is, how it is cultivated, produced, consumed, exchanged, transported, stored and marketed – we find the fundamental connection between people and the planet and the path towards inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Today, we know what policies have worked to counter hunger, but we need to invest more economic resources to further reduce the figures. And for that, we need political will and commitment over and above party interests.

With regard to excess weight and obesity, as yet no formula has enabled us to curb or begin to reverse the rise in these forms of malnutrition. However, there are countries that have introduced legislative measures geared towards combatting them and we also know what a healthy diet consists of. ■

# STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

**Inequality, conflicts, climate change,  
food waste and lack of social protection  
slow down progress towards Zero Hunger.**

The right to food covers the problem of hunger and malnutrition, including inadequate nutrition and unhealthy eating habits. While interrelated, these issues do not always have the same causes, with temporary problems often converging with structural problems. Let us start with the oldest and the most pressing.

## **INEQUALITY AND MARGINALIZATION**

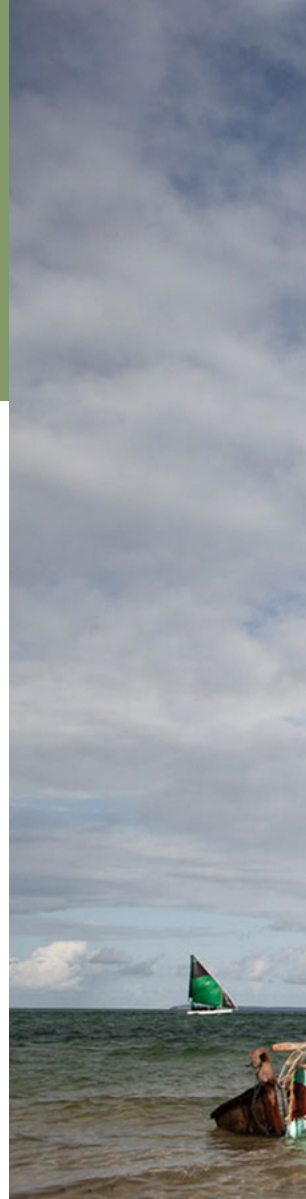
Today, the problem of hunger is not related to quantity and production, but to limited access to food due to lack of income or lack of resources to produce it. The majority of those experiencing food insecurity suffer from some type of marginalization that makes it difficult or impossible for them to have a decent job or access credit, markets, land or water. This situation hits women twice as hard, with the burden of gender inequality being added to socio-economic, ethnic and other types of discrimination.

This is not a new problem: historically, asymmetries have existed in relation to access to resources and the operation of markets, asymmetries which – in recent decades – have been exacerbated by the transformation of food systems. New realities have been created, primarily affecting agricultural communities in poor countries. Land use is no longer dedicated to satisfying the needs of the local population and is now about feeding the insatiable demand of far-off markets. This creates paradoxes whereby many of the farmers in Ghana that produce mangoes and papayas for consumption in Europe, continue to suffer from food insecurity.

The lack of adequate policies to promote capacity-building among family farmers, address their needs and allow them to join markets in a fair way has been compounded in many countries by other phenomena; for example, land grabbing for the exclusive use of other countries

or major companies, driven by policies that favour large investments in contexts of weak governance and that contribute to the impoverishment and food insecurity of rural communities.

In many cases, the effects of climate change and poor environmental management compound this neglect of the most vulnerable rural populations, heightening competition for land and water, and in turn feeding



A fisher carries the daily catch from shore to market. Mozambique is one of the 55 signatories to the Agreement on Port State Measures to eliminate IUU fishing.  
©FAO/Filipe Branquinho



the vicious cycle of poverty and hunger, and increasing the risk of conflicts.

### **ILLEGAL FISHING AND DEFORESTATION**

There are other phenomena that also contribute to perpetuating hunger. Illegal fishing, known officially as “illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing” (IUU), is another contributing factor. In 2015, FAO estimated that 33.1 percent of fish stocks were

at a biologically unsustainable level and were the victim of overfishing, often linked to illegal fishing. Illegal fishing is estimated to handle some 26 million tonnes per year (15 percent of total global production) and is worth between USD 10 billion and USD 23 billion. It has economic consequences (losses for honest fishers, black market, money laundering, tax evasion and corruption), environmental

**ILLEGAL  
FISHING AND  
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## STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

**CONFLICTS  
CAUSE PEOPLE  
TO FLEE THEIR  
HOMES, DISRUPT  
MARKETS AND  
AGGRAVATE  
FOOD  
INSECURITY.**

consequences (major threats to biodiversity and the environment) and human consequences (threats to food security and labour abuses). Developing countries are especially vulnerable to illegal fishing because it depletes the resources of often landless coastal communities found in remote and developing rural areas. As a result, IUU fishing is a threat to subsistence, it exacerbates poverty and increases food insecurity.

The same applies to the depletion of forest resources. Forests and trees on farms are a direct source of food and income for over 1 billion poor people across the world. They provide both basic food and supplementary food, such as fruit, nuts and edible leaves. In India alone, over 50 million people directly depend on forests for subsistence, while in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, wild foods are consumed daily by 80 percent of the population.

Food insecurity is closely linked to poverty and to limited opportunities for generating employment and income. The income from forests and from the trees found on farms can contribute to the food security of rural families. In Ghana, Mozambique or



Zambia, for example, rural families obtain 30 percent of their income from non-wood forest products, such as fruit, mushrooms, insects, honey and medicinal plants. Therefore, deforestation not only exacerbates climate change and has dramatic effects on biodiversity, it also contributes to food insecurity on our planet.



## SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

More than six years of conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic have triggered food insecurity. In 2017, FAO launched an animal health campaign to help displaced farmers who depend on livestock production.

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food security for a large portion of the population.

Conflicts are the main factor driving population displacement and displaced people are among the most vulnerable in the world, suffering from a high degree of food insecurity and undernutrition. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons has increased with the growing number of conflicts, doubling between 2007 and 2015 to a total of approximately 64 million people. Furthermore, one in every 113 people is a refugee or an internally displaced person, or is seeking asylum.

Conflicts and violence are also causing and protracting food insecurity in many host communities. For instance, the civil war in the Syrian Arab Republic has forced over 6 million people to flee their homes and move to other parts of the country, while a further 5 million have left for neighbouring states. In Lebanon alone, a country with 6 million inhabitants, there are over a million Syrian refugees.

The situation has also worsened in war-free countries, especially those affected by economic downturns. In recent years,

## WARS BEHIND UPSURGE IN HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY

According to the FAO report *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017*, one of the causes of the upsurge in hunger is the increase in conflicts during the last ten years, particularly insofar as rural communities are concerned. Fifty-six percent of the population in countries

affected by conflicts lives in rural areas, where livelihoods largely depend on agriculture. Conflicts negatively affect almost all aspects of agriculture and food systems, from production, harvesting, processing and transport to input supply, financing and marketing. In many of those countries, subsistence farming remains essential for

# STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

states that depend on exporting commodities have suffered a sharp decrease in their revenue and exports, and this has affected access to food because either it can no longer be imported or there are no policies protecting poor households against price increases.

## LACK OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

Another factor perpetuating hunger is the lack of social protection for the poorest people. In the face of any type of crisis – economic, military or climate – a lack of social protection exacerbates the situation of the most vulnerable part of society. Even during periods of economic growth, the most disadvantaged groups are hit by diseases and other eventualities that they cannot overcome if they lack social protection.

That is why, in the short term, programmes involving income transfer (cash or in kind) or subsidies to facilitate access to health care, education, housing and public services can help the most vulnerable to reduce hunger and undernutrition and are particularly important for traditionally marginalized groups, such as indigenous people or women. Moreover, when well designed, they contribute

to improving child nutrition. In situations of economic growth, these instruments also support the success of other development policies and can help to mitigate the risks, for example, when a family invests in new agricultural technologies to help improve their economic situation in the medium and long term.

However, there are other factors influencing food security, including women's level of education; the resources allocated to national policies and programmes on nutrition for pregnant and lactating women and infants; access to clean water, basic sanitation and quality health services; way of life; the food environment; and culture. In particular, in high- and upper-middle-income countries, food insecurity and obesity often coexist, even in the same household. When resources for acquiring food are in short supply and access to truly nutritious food diminishes, people opt to consume less healthy and more energy-dense options that can cause them to become overweight and obese. As such, eating just anything is not enough; people need to eat well, with this idea of a healthy diet having very important implications for the international agenda.

**FEEDING THE  
ENTIRE GLOBAL  
POPULATION  
REQUIRES THAT  
ALL ACTORS IN  
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EFFORTS TO  
REDUCE FOOD  
LOSS AND  
WASTE.**



## EGYPT

Wasted tomatoes at Bilbeis  
wholesale market.  
©FAO/Heba Khamis

## FOOD WASTE

For a long time, whenever the fight against hunger was discussed, emphasis was placed on the need to increase food production. The idea was that it was necessary to produce enough food to supply the greatest number of people possible. But today we know that the problem does not lie with production, at least not for the time being. In fact, one-third of what we produce is wasted every year along the food chain – that is, some 1.3 billion tonnes of food. There is more than enough food, but not everyone can access it. All countries, in one way or

another, waste food in similar proportions. However, depending on each country's income, food loss and waste occur at different points along the food chain: in developed countries, the consumer contributes most to waste, while in low-income countries, food loss happens at all points along the food chain, from production to storage or transport.

One of the greatest challenges of this century is how to ensure that a growing global population, expected to reach 10 billion inhabitants by 2050, can access enough healthy food to satisfy

its nutritional needs. If we fail to change current trends and meat and animal protein consumption continue to grow indiscriminately, if unhealthy energy-dense diets continue spreading, if we fail to reduce food waste and loss or to ensure the entire population's access to adequate nutrition, we will be heading towards a dead end. That is why transforming this socially and environmentally unsustainable food system, and getting all actors involved, from producers right through to consumers – including governments and economic actors – is indispensable. ►

# STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

## OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

What has changed to make our diet a danger to our health? There is no one single cause: the problem must be approached from multiple perspectives because a lot has changed regarding the food we eat. The way we eat has changed because the way we live has changed. In 2008 the world's urban population exceeded the rural population for the first time in history, and by 2030, it is estimated that 60 percent of the world's population will live in cities, where more people will have to be fed.

We have moved away from the vegetable garden and local grocer towards supermarkets, and away from fresh produce towards processed foods. We are also seeing increasingly less food systems that are focused on family farming, traditional and effective farming and soil management techniques, crop grouping for different foodstuffs, minimal processing, and distribution networks linked to local economies via markets, fairs and small merchants. Instead, food systems are emerging that

operate based on single crops that provide raw materials for ultra-processed food production, or food for intensive animal rearing. These also pollute far more than traditional systems. Due to the widespread use of agrochemicals, including antibiotics to boost growth in livestock farming, their residues often appear in our food and water. In addition to causing a growing problem of antibiotic resistance, this overuse affects the diversity of the beneficial microbes found in our intestines, leading to negative health consequences, including the possibility of developing obesity, diabetes and other non-communicable diseases.

With supermarkets becoming increasingly dominated by large companies, it has become easier to get hold of processed foods, at the expense of fresh foods and traditional dietary habits. Depending on the country, it can be cheaper to buy processed baked goods and pre-cooked products than to buy fresh fruit and products to cook at home. FAO warns that often processed food “is high in saturated fats, salt and sugar and tends to be



### THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Fast food and over-processed foods are high in fat, salt and sugar, and tend to have low nutritional content.

©FAO/Robert Atanasovski

low in vitamin and mineral content”. However, processed food is everywhere, it tends to be cheaper, and people often lack the information or the necessary means to make the healthiest food choices.



**AROUND  
672 MILLION  
ADULTS AROUND  
THE WORLD ARE  
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FOR EVERYONE.**

In this context, it seems clear that achieving the goal of a world free from hunger and malnutrition by 2030 will be a very difficult challenge if we do no more than we have done

to date. For countries to be successful, they need to turn political commitment into specific measures, and achieving this will require addressing the issue from a multisectoral perspective. ■

# FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

FAO supports parliamentarians in their efforts to promote laws on food security.

Improvements in food security and nutrition are the result of numerous policies and the contribution of multiple actors operating on a long-term basis. They therefore require lasting consensus and adequate resources; in other words, they need solid political commitment that translates into effective action.

To achieve lasting results, we need to consider the four key dimensions identified by FAO:

1. policies, programmes and legal frameworks;
2. governance and coordination;
3. evidence-based decision-making; and
4. implementation.

## 1. POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Eliminating hunger and malnutrition requires policies, strategies, laws and investment plans that guide the action of all sectors. Within each sector, it is also important to take into account how these policies can contribute to or affect food security and nutrition.

One of the keys to implementing these programmes and policies coherently is to adopt framework laws, something which more and more countries are doing. The term “framework law” refers to a legislative mechanism used to address multisectoral issues. Framework legislation lays down the general principles and obligations that guide action in the different sectors, delegating specific details to the sectoral rules and regulations.

Following this general approach to ensure coherence, sectoral policies and laws must also consider food security and nutrition from within their specific areas; for example, shaping production policies that take into account needs and capacity-building among family farmers, pastoralists and artisanal fishers, as well as their contribution to food security and nutrition in their communities.

The process of developing effective laws against hunger and malnutrition should be based on multiple elements. Together with the political will to propose legislation aimed at containing the problem, it is often necessary to consolidate parliamentary action through multisector cooperation and collaboration and by strengthening the knowledge of legislators. In order to be able to address such broad and complex issues, it is important for parliaments to collaborate with national and international knowledge hubs and for there to be mechanisms for dialogue with the different stakeholders.

Raising the awareness of the general public as well as of the executive and judicial branches is also important in preparing for legitimate and lasting legislative change.

Through the **Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative (HFLACI)**, the region’s countries committed to permanently eliminating hunger on the continent by 2025 and, in the framework of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), they are working together to create the conditions to achieve this. FAO supports these efforts and, in the legislative



## SPAIN

September 2018. Event on the occasion of the creation of the Spanish Parliamentary Alliance for the Right to Food. The alliance is made up of more than 169 deputies and senators from all political groups.

©FAO/Patricia Pascau

# THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE LAWS IS BASED ON MULTIPLE ELEMENTS, INCLUDING DATA ANALYSIS AND RAISING AWARENESS OF THE EXECUTIVE POWER.

field, has been collaborating with the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO) since 2009, as well as with over 20 national parliaments, in the development of framework and sectoral laws that contribute to strengthening food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture policies.

In Nepal, FAO assisted in the process of drafting the new constitution, which was adopted in 2015 and explicitly recognizes the right to food. Since then, it has continued providing technical assistance and facilitating experience exchanges and discussions to prepare laws to implement the constitutional

precepts – in September 2018 the Nepalese parliament passed 11 laws on fundamental rights, prominent among which, the right to food and the right to land access.

In 2014, African countries adopted the **Malabo Declaration**, also aimed at achieving Zero Hunger. FAO has supported African countries through the African Union and subregional bodies such as ECOWAS and IGAD to improve the National Agricultural Investment Plans. Since 2016, it has also worked with the Pan-African Parliament to strengthen legislative processes in matters of food security and nutrition at national level. ►

# FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

**FAO FACILITATES  
DIALOGUE  
BETWEEN PAR-  
LIAMENTARIANS  
AND PROVIDES  
TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE TO  
STRENGTHEN  
THEIR  
CAPACITIES.**

## 2. GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

For the efforts of different actors to be truly effective, they must be coordinated, involve collective action and be based on consensus around what to do and how to do it. That is why it is important to set up mechanisms that facilitate constant dialogue between stakeholders, from consumers to producers – including governments, civil society organizations, universities and the private sector – so that the decision-making process reflects the interests and needs of everyone, especially the most vulnerable.

A second challenge involves improving coordination and developing more effective and efficient actions. There can be no progress without an environment that creates incentives for all stakeholders, allowing them to participate in decision-making, policy formation and implementation. In this regard, FAO works with stakeholders at the national, regional and international level to improve their governance mechanisms.

Parliaments play an essential role in improving coordination and governance in food security and

nutrition because:  
1) through legislation, they can develop governance structures and mechanisms; 2) through budget allocation, they can ensure that the former have adequate resources to operate; and 3) by monitoring government action, they can encourage greater coordination.

## 3. EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

Without data, it is impossible to know the extent of a problem





## ITALY

Debate on the role of parliamentarians in the fight against hunger, during the Fortieth Session of the FAO Conference.

©FAO/Giuseppe Carotenuto

to support the work of statistics and evaluation agencies and to have solid and reliable reports on the situation of food security and nutrition and on policy and programme performance. Without these efforts, it is impossible to analyse whether there has been progress.

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION

For countries to translate their policies and investment plans into specific measures, they need to efficiently mobilize and allocate financial and human resources in support of food security and nutrition. There are multiple ways to achieve this, but, without doubt, improving the capacity to determine the costs of each intervention or programme and to evaluate the funding they might need is essential for implementing policies and plans.

In addition, effective implementation requires strengthening the human and organizational capacities of institutions working on nutrition and food security issues. Without well-prepared professionals with the ability to deliver and the knowledge to act, it is impossible for any legislative measure to have an impact. ■

or to evaluate whether a specific programme has had an impact. Good decision-making comes from analysing data based on reliable statistics and information and making the analyses and information reach members of government and the parliament in an understandable and timely manner.

At the same time, understanding current policies, programmes, legislation and investments is essential for overseeing and

evaluating their real impact on reducing a country's rates of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. In other words, identifying whether a law is really having the desired impact requires monitoring it, assessing whether it has served to bring about progress and, if necessary, correcting any errors, in all cases basing our efforts on reliable data.

That is why it is also essential for governments and parliaments

# THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

Parliamentarians play a key role in approving laws, supervising budgets and driving change.

“Parliamentarians can play a central role in rethinking the way policies are produced and carried out. You can help to orient national programmes towards sustainable development goals. You can bring the views and aspirations of your citizens into the global arena.” (Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, 2007–2016)

However, what exactly are the instruments that members of parliament can use today to tackle the problem of hunger and malnutrition?

Legislation is the way a society makes organized decisions, sets priorities and creates basic ground rules. That is the essential role of parliamentarians, but it is not the only one. They also have a voice when it comes to approving budgets and a crucial role in overseeing other state powers, such as the executive branch, which they can criticize, question or authorize to act.

There is no longer any doubt regarding the need to adopt a

legal framework that establishes the principles and guidelines required to govern the coordination of policies against hunger and malnutrition. Therefore, legislative initiatives are a fundamental part of that approach, in fact it is with this in mind that during the last decade countries such as Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, Kenya, Maldives, Mexico, Nepal and Niger have enhanced recognition of the right to food in their constitutions.

In particular, in Latin America and the Caribbean there has been significant parliamentary action aimed at guaranteeing or promoting full realization of the right to food. Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru have adopted framework laws and other countries such as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico and Uruguay currently have legislative processes under way for that same purpose.

## HAITI

In July 2017, Haiti created its own parliamentary front with 69 deputy signatures. The front has received key support from Guadalupe Valdez (to the right), founder of the PFH in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Zero Hunger Ambassador. ©FAO

For almost a decade, the **Parliamentary Front against Hunger (PFH) in Latin America and the Caribbean** has focused on these goals. This is a multinational group of parliamentarians seeking to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in the region through the formulation of effective legislation and public policies, awareness-raising and alliances with civil society, academia, international organizations and other key actors.





**SINCE ITS  
FOUNDATION,  
THE PFH HAS  
APPROVED  
MORE THAN  
20 LAWS  
RELATED TO THE  
RIGHT TO FOOD.**

Since its formation in 2009, the PFH has directly or indirectly supported the adoption of more than 20 laws related to the right to food, contributing towards efforts to achieve food and nutrition security in the region. The PFH's goals include developing effective legal and institutional instruments to guarantee the right to food; bringing together and coordinating legislative representatives seeking alliances with civil society; opening up consultation, discussion and awareness-raising opportunities; and generating and exchanging

knowledge and experiences so as to make the most of technical assistance, good practices and lessons learned in diverse political arenas. Climate change, nutrition, gender and participative governance are also key issues due to their impact on food security.

Through partnerships with specialized agencies such as FAO, parliamentarians and their advisors participate in training workshops, analytical processes, experience exchanges and public information and media

# THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

campaigns. They also receive important technical support in developing laws with a focus on human rights.

All of this work has been reflected in specific measures that can be grouped into three fields: legislative frameworks, budgets and monitoring executive action. Below, we analyse specific cases within these fields in order to understand their scope.

## LEGISLATIVE ACTION IN BRAZIL

The best example of how to build an effective legal system in the fight against hunger and malnutrition can be found in Brazil. At the start of the millennium, the then president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, prioritized reducing hunger figures through an ambitious programme of political and social measures whose ultimate aim was to guarantee the right to food for the entire population.

In 2006, a food security framework law was adopted: the **Organic Law for Food and Nutrition Security**. This is the key instrument used to legislate on food matters in the country and it requires the government to adopt the policies and actions needed to promote and guarantee the population's food and

nutrition security. It also provided for the creation of the National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN) to promote the Human Right to Adequate Food (HRAF).

The SISAN is governed by six principles: universality, equity, respect, autonomy, social participation and transparency. It comprises a series of bodies and organizations that are striving to formulate and implement policies and plans for food and nutrition security, integrate the efforts of government and civil society, and promote follow-up, monitoring and evaluation.

The **School Feeding Law** adopted in 2009 establishes the right to food for all students, and as such promotes the provision of school meals. School feeding has gained increasing recognition as a social protection instrument for the most vulnerable and as a guarantee of access to adequate food for minors.

The law also provides that at least 30 percent of school food must come from family farming. This way, economic growth reaches the poorest part of the population, thereby contributing to the elimination of both hunger and poverty.

## GUATEMALA

The food that students receive at this school in El Horizonte is prepared with fresh local ingredients. Last year, Guatemala approved a new law to ensure school meals throughout the whole country.  
©Pep Bonet/NOOR for FAO

Lastly, in 2010, Brazil passed an amendment to include the Human Right to Food in its constitution. Clearly and explicitly incorporating the right to adequate food into the constitution affords it the highest level of protection and aids coherent interpretation of the related laws.

## GUATEMALA: BUDGETS TO FEED A COUNTRY

In 2017, Guatemala institutionalized and formalized its School Feeding programme, defining a clear framework of powers, responsibilities, guiding





principles and priorities through **Decree 16-2017**. The law also addresses the issue of funding, increasing the amount allocated to each student and doubling it for rural students.

Before it was adopted, Guatemala's 2.2 million school-age children had the right to a small daily snack. However, the new law recognizes the state's duty to offer consistent daily food to all school-age students in public and free private centres and also specifies that the money must come

from the Ministry of Education – therefore forming part of its budgetary allocation and guaranteeing continuity.

Furthermore, it provides for healthy and locally-adapted menus that respect the cultural characteristics of each community. It also pushes to improve the infrastructure and facilities of kitchens and dining halls in the country's schools and to instil healthy eating habits, promoting the consumption of fresh produce and the creation of school gardens. ►

**COUNTRIES IN  
LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE  
CARIBBEAN  
PROMOTE  
SCHOOL FEEDING  
AND FAMILY  
FARMING AS  
KEY TOOLS IN  
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AGAINST  
HUNGER.**

# THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

In addition, the law takes a crucial step with regard to purchasing food produced via family farming and stipulates that more resources must be provided to create programmes to evaluate the impact of school meals, so that over time they can be improved or possible shortcomings can be remedied.

## URUGUAY: PROTECTING FAMILY FARMING AND ARTISANAL FISHERIES

Uruguay took a crucial step in 2014 by introducing **Law 19292 on Family Farming Production and Artisanal Fisheries**. With it, both sectors were declared “of general national interest”, and legal, budgetary and executive oversight mechanisms were put in place to favour their economic growth, with all that this entails for improving food and nutrition security and for the economic development of sectors which the laws of supply and demand have traditionally worked against.

The law affects all public bodies and provides that a minimum of 30 percent of centralized state purchases and 100 percent of non-centralized purchases must be covered by family production, thereby helping to boost the

consumption of local family farming products through the public sector.

Hospitals and schools are supplied this way and family farming is also used to deal with emergencies, as was the case in the aftermath of the floods that hit Uruguay in 2017.

When the law came into force, it was estimated that at least 30 000 families would benefit. The key idea was that by strengthening short supply chains and increasing local purchases, family businesses could gain improved market access. A cooperative approach could also be encouraged and a shorter and more efficient value chain would improve prices for consumers. In collaboration with the Right to Food Observatory at the University of the Republic, Uruguay’s Parliamentary Front against Hunger has promoted a study to monitor and evaluate the law’s implementation in order to be able to introduce improvements in future.

## CHILE: PIONEER IN RESPONSIBLE LABELLING

In 2010, Chile discovered that 60 percent of its population was overweight and that 25 percent of children under

six years of age suffered from obesity, making the problem of malnutrition due to excess the country’s main public health concern. Faced with this issue, a group of parliamentarians led by Senator Guido Girardi asked itself the question: What determines people’s food habits and nutritional status?

There is no simple answer. They are determined by multiple factors and one of the most influential is the food environment, including marketing and advertisement, the information available and nutrition labelling. That is where Chile wanted to make a difference.

This led to the adoption of **Law 20.606 on the Nutritional Composition of Food and Food Advertising** in 2012, though it did not come into force until 2016. The law provides for the creation of mandatory front warning labels for products that exceed the limits set by the Ministry of Health in relation to the recommended intake of sugar, saturated fats, salt and calories.

The law improves the nutritional information available, encouraging healthy food choices through the mandatory



## CHILE

Senator Guido Girardi, main author of the Chilean food labelling law, speaking at the international conference “Towards a healthier world: promoting alliances for the regulation of food environments”.  
©FAO/Max Valencia

addition of front warning messages on black labels: “HIGH IN” followed by calories, saturated fats, sugar or sodium. It also restricts advertising food with black labels to children under 14 years of age and provides that healthy food must be offered in schools, prohibiting the sale, promotion and free delivery of black-labelled products in schools.

The **Implementing Regulations for Law 20.606** consisted of two phases. In June 2018, the second phase entered into effect, reducing

the initial limits. The law now provides that for every 100 cc, drinks exceeding 80 calories, 100 mg of sodium, 5 g of sugar or 3 g of saturated fats will have to carry a warning label. For solid food, the limit is set for every 100 g and any food exceeding 300 calories, 500 mg of sodium, 15 g of sugar or 5 g of fat will require a warning label.

In 2017, the Chilean government published the first evaluation report on the law, finding that compliance stood at 72 percent.

After a year in force, its success is perhaps best reflected in the population’s perception of it. Ninety-four percent of the 1 067 people surveyed thought it was “good or very good” to require labels for products that are “high in”; 91 percent also approved of prohibiting their sale in schools; and 74 percent approved of prohibiting their advertisement to children. The products that have most felt the impact of the labelling law are biscuits, followed by drinks and crisps: these are the things Chileans claim to be consuming less of now. ■

# A LONG JOURNEY

## PARLIAMENTARY FRONTS AGAINST HUNGER, AND LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES FOR THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD AND NUTRITION

The experience of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2009–2016

This publication details the experience of the Parliamentary Front against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting legislation aimed at achieving the right to adequate food. It presents some of the lessons learned on how the associated parliamentary fronts work and the mechanisms that have proved useful to them. There is also a summary of the most significant legislative results achieved on food security and nutrition; school meals and healthy eating; and family farming. This information will be of use to members of parliament and other interested parties looking to strengthen legal frameworks on food and nutrition.

Available at:  
<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7872e.pdf>

## THE RIGHT TO FOOD

During the 1990s, there was a significant increase in global awareness of the fundamental causes of food and nutrition insecurity, leading to the adoption of a common definition of food security by FAO Member Countries at the World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996. Social and civil movements such as La Via Campesina, which represents small-scale farmers and their organizations around the world, helped broaden the debate, providing concepts such as “food sovereignty”.

In 1999, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provided a precise legal definition for exercising and guaranteeing the right to food in its General Comment No. 12: “The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or the means for its procurement.” In order to guide its implementation, and in the framework of the Committee on World Food Security, representatives from governments, civil society and academia drew up the *Voluntary Guidelines to Support Progressive*

The right to adequate food has been a legally binding human right in international law for more than 35 years.

*Realization of the Right to Adequate Food*, which were adopted by consensus at the FAO Council meeting in 2004.

## PARLIAMENTARY FRONT AGAINST HUNGER

In the new millennium, several policy initiatives have contributed to placing the fight against hunger and food insecurity on national and regional agendas, sending a clear message that, today, suffering from hunger is unacceptable. In 2005, the Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative (HFLACI) was launched by Brazil

## GUATEMALA

July 2018. Legislators during the Sixth Planning Meeting of the Parliamentary Front against Hunger. ©FAO



and Guatemala. All countries in the region subsequently joined the initiative, making it the first regional commitment to eliminate hunger. The goal was to create the means to permanently eliminate it by 2025.

The idea of setting up a Latin American and Caribbean network of parliamentarians to coordinate and drive the various national initiatives emerged from this commitment among the region's countries. It was considered essential to boost the formulation of public policies and effective and lasting legislation

capable of overcoming changes in government and global economic fluctuations to confront hunger and malnutrition in a definitive and sustainable way.

During the first Parliamentary Forum on the Right to Food, held in the Dominican Republic in September 2008, the Declaration of Santo Domingo was drawn up and it was agreed to create the Parliamentary Front against Hunger (PFH). The regional PFH for Latin America and the Caribbean was formally launched in 2009, during the Inter-Parliamentary Conference

on Food and Nutrition Security in Panama. A declaration explicitly committing to combat hunger was signed by 65 parliamentarians from 19 countries.

This Front sought to forge connections with other committed actors, strengthening multisector coordination and policy collaboration in alliance with existing fronts or social movements in the struggle against hunger. This coordinated effort to eliminate hunger has involved the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO), the Forum of

# A LONG JOURNEY

Presidents of Legislative Powers of Central America and the Caribbean Basin (FOPREL), the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), the Andean Parliament (PARLANDINO) and the South American Parliament (PARLASUR).

The participation of FAO and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) has also been key. From the outset, both agencies have been instrumental in carrying out the PFH's work at national and regional level, providing technical and logistical assistance, and playing an important role in training and planning. The technical and financial support structure has been crucial for the sustainability and impact of the PFH.

Since its creation in 2009 and after the first PFH Forum was held in Brazil in 2010, the PFH movement has grown significantly, with the 300-plus parliamentarians currently involved in 2018 establishing themselves as key actors in the fight against hunger in the region. The composition of the PFH is based on diversity and inclusion and sustained by the common interest and will of parliamentarians working to end hunger, malnutrition and

poverty, rising above political trends. Their shared objective affords them greater continuity, enabling them to transcend political parties. As a result, they have the capacity to bring together different positions from all sides of the political and social spectrum.

Reaffirming this commitment, in 2015, the members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) adopted the Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025 (CELAC FNS Plan), placing the issue of the fight against hunger at the top of political agendas in the region's countries. The PFH is crucial for implementing the plan.

Currently, under the PFH umbrella, there are 19 national, four departmental and two regional parliamentary fronts against hunger (PARLATINO and PARLANDINO). These parliamentary fronts are recognized by and collaborate with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and other regional integration fora. Their legislative initiatives have given rise to the adoption of over 20 laws relating to food sovereignty and security, the right to food, school

feeding, family farming, food labelling and artisanal fisheries. Both South-South cooperation and the interregional exchange of information and legislative experiences have gained increasing importance in the work of the PFH.

Likewise, in other regions, there is a growing movement of parliamentarians committed

## [LEFT] **EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

During the Twenty-third Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, member countries approved the Malabo Declaration to end hunger in Africa by 2025.  
©FAO/Melchor Mba Ada

## [TOP RIGHT] **COSTA RICA**

The CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025 was presented at the Third CELAC Summit Meeting in January 2015.  
©FAO

## [BOTTOM RIGHT] **MONGOLIA**

Presentation of the Zero Hunger Challenge in Asia and the Pacific during the Thirty-second FAO Regional Conference in the region.  
©FAO/Chinbold Dugermac



to continued and coordinated efforts to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. In October 2016, the Pan-African Parliament launched its Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, which countries such as Benin, the Congo, Madagascar and Uganda have joined. These countries are also establishing their own national alliances. The European Parliament launched the Alliance on the Fight

Against Hunger in 2016, while Italy and Spain set up national alliances with the same commitment in 2016 and 2018, respectively. Japan and the United States of America also have a tradition of parliamentarians working through leagues and caucuses to create a hunger-free world.

In recent years, regular exchanges have been taking

place between African, European and Latin American and Caribbean parliamentarians with the common aim of achieving Zero Hunger. Following the First Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition held in Madrid in October 2018, the focus of parliamentarians on the fight against hunger has entered the global arena. ■

# PARLIAMENTARY ALLIANCES AGAINST HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

First Global  
Parliamentary Summit.  
Madrid, October 2018



World hunger has risen for the third consecutive year in 2017, reaching 821 million people. Moreover, one in three people suffers from malnutrition – in other words, they have an unbalanced diet.

Eradicating hunger and malnutrition by 2030 requires strategies, public policies, national laws and programmes that guarantee the right to adequate food for everyone, contribute to reducing hunger and improve people's diets according to each country's specific context.

Realizing this need, FAO has promoted different initiatives to support collective action between legislative representatives, development partners, specialized agencies and non-governmental actors. The Parliamentary Front against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has approved

more than 20 laws regarding food security and nutrition in the region, was formed in 2009. Since then, similar parliamentary movements have started in other regions, including the Pan-African Parliamentary Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition and the European Parliamentary Alliance on the Fight Against Hunger.

This publication gives an overview of the structural causes behind hunger and malnutrition and introduces FAO's framework for action to achieve strong political will and design long-lasting measures in favour of Sustainable Development Goal 2. Providing examples of legislative successes in different countries, including constitutional amendments, school feeding laws and family farming programmes, the publication shows how parliamentary alliances play a key role in the realization of the right to adequate food.